Shri N.R. Narayana Murty,
Chairman, Infosys Technoligies Ltd.

Dr. V.A. Pal Panandiker,
President & Professor, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi.

Dr. V.R. Panchmukhi,

Director, Research and Information Systems for Non-aligned and Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi.

Dr.Smt. Suman Sahay, Gene Campaign, New Delhi.

Shri K.B. Dadi Seth,
Chairman, Hindustan Lever Limited.

Shri P.P. Prabhu,
Commerce Secretary, GOI.

Shri N.N. Khanna,
Special Secretary (Commerce), GOI.

(c) The terms of reference of the Committee are: (i) to discuss periodically on going negotiations in multilateral trade bodies as well as other bodies in respect of trade related issues, with special emphasis on discussions and negotiations in the WTO; (ii) to review the status of legislation/administrative action on international obligations in the sphere of trade; (iii) to examine, from time to time, non-tariff barriers and tariff barriers against Indian goods and the action being pursued for dismantling such barriers; (iv) to recommend strategies for increasing market access for Indian goods; (v) to analyze the implications of various changes in the global commercial scenario with the intention of recommending suitable policy changes; & (vi) any other policy issues that the Minister of Commerce may wish to place for consideration.

Steps to Reduce Trade Deficit

637. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's trade deficit has touched/is likely to touch soon 5 per cent of the GDP; and

(b) if so, the steps taken/contemplated by Government to fight/overcome 1991 like situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional data received from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCIS), the trade deficit during April-December, 1998-99 was Rs. 30597 crores as against Central Statistical Organisation Gross Domestic Product quick estimates of Rs. 1426670 crores at current prices for the year 1997-98.

(b) Export promotion measures are continuously being taken by the Government through changes in policies and procedures for providing an export friendly environment, involvement of States in export promotion and consultation with trade and industry. A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through several measures to facilitate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure shortcomings, improve export facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian Exports. The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.